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OPINIONS

ON THE

LIFE OF RAMTANU LAHIRI

BRAHMAN AND REFORMER

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EDITED BY

SIR ROPER LETHBRIDGE, M.A., K.C.I.E.

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RAMTANU LAHIRI

BRAHMAN AND REFORMER

A HISTORY OF THE RENAISSANCE IN BENGAL

WITH 29 HALFTONE PORTRAITS OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS CONTEMPORARIES.

From the Bengali of

PANDIT SIVANATH SASTRI, M.A.

EDITED BY

SIR ROPER LETHBRIDGE, K.C.I.E.

LONDON

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OPINIONS

THE TIMES, LONDON.

October 17, 1907.

Ramtanu Lahiri was a Brahman of high lineage who as an educationist bore a leading part in the reform which has taken place in Bengali life and thought, being known, Sir Roper Letbridge tells us, as "the Arnold of Bengal," and who died in 1898. The present life is described by Sir Roper Lethbridge as "the most serious and sustained effort to combine in a biographical work Oriental and Western modes of thought that has yet appeared in Bengali."

PALL MALL GAZETTE, LONDON.

November 27, 1907.

Opinions may differ as to whether Babu Ramtanu Lahiri was sufficiently distinguished to deserve so handsome a volume as that which has just been issued under the kindly editorship of Sir Roper Lethbridge. He was a man of saintly character, wise, earnest, learned, and progressive, but the book, which professes to be biography, is really the best evidence that there was not enough in his life, or his utterances, to make him the hero of a long discourse. It often happens that men who excite the greatest personal affection, and whose friendship and counsel are most valued, do few things in the course of their lives by which a biographer can arouse the interest of strangers. Ramtanu is rather the excuse for a delightfully discursive survey of the period covered by the Renaissance in Bengal than the actual subject of the book. The editor, than whom there is no better authority, describes it as "quite the most scholarly book of its kind...that has yet appeared in Bengali," and we quite agree with him. He knew Ramtanu intimately, and gives a terse character sketch of the old teacher which shows him as a refined and noble-minded man

full of the "milk of human kindness," reverencing truth, and demonstrating in a remarkable degree that tenderness and self-sacrifice within the family circle which are the best features of the Bengali character. The book itself covers the greater part of the nineteenth century. It brings us in touch with the reasons which induced Macaulay to become a fervent advocate of Western methods of education at a time when the leading men in the old East India Company were full of doubts as to the wisdom of that policy. Undoubtedly the great essayist was wrong when he said that "a single shelf of a good European Library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." He was neither a Sanscrit nor an Arabic scholar: but it may be acknowledged that, while the intensity of his arguments was in excess of the justification underlying them, he was right, broadly speaking, in his view that development of the Indian population into a condition fitting it for a share in the administration of the country under British sovereignty could only take place along Western lines. In truth, it is mainly to Western education that Bengal owes the creation of a literature which can be called its own. But no great movement is without its drawbacks. To-day we may be suffering from the indiscriminate expansion of the principles Macaulay advocated. In the days with which Pandit Sàstri deals the young men of Bengal carried their imitation of English ideas and habits too far. We need not enter into the vexed question of the effect produced by missionaries who railed against Hinduism. It is sufficient to note that the use of strong liquor became a pitfall to many of the clever young men of that time; and it stands out to the credit of Ramtanu that, when he noted these evil consequences of wine drinking, he gave up his own very moderate use of stimulants, so that his example should not lead others into danger.

One good purpose this volume may serve. It pays a worthy tribute to men like Mr. David Hare, Sir William Hunter, and many who are still alive for the sympathy they gave to Ramtanu Lahiri and other Indian students, and it shows with what disinterested sincerity such men strove to promote the welfare of Bengali youths, to fit them for places in the public service. When the ladder was being reared for them, Bengalis were grateful to the strong hands which

raised it, but now a good many who have climbed it are endeavouring to kick away the means of their intellectual elevation. The pity of this is that it destroys the possibility of such warm friendships and sympathies as men like Ramtanu encouraged with Europeans These were a foundation upon which the best interests of both races were being developed with perfect safety and mutual advantage As Sir Roper Lethbridge says, the influence Ramtanu exercised was altogether a wholesome one because "It taught men to become not merely reformers in the ordinary sense of the term—not merely teachers of a destructive creed that is only critical without being sympathetic—but also better citizens and better men, with earnest longings for intellectual and moral progress, yet not without full appreciation of all that was best in the past, and a conservative desire to retain and improve it'

WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

December, 1907.

Just at present, when the question of reform in India is, and is likely to continue to be, before the British public, we owe special thanks to Sir Roper Lethbridge for introducing to English readers the learned Pandit's life of "Ramtanu Lahiri" The book is much more than a mere biography of a man who had much to do with the rise and development of reform in Bengal during the last century It introduces us to the life and manners of the people and to many of their leaders, during an important epoch We meet here men like Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Derozio, David Hare, and quite a host of others, to whom the Bengali, and we as governors of the Bengali, owe a great debt So little do many of our people here at home know of Indian life and history, that we imagine many readers of this book will here learn for the first time the names of nineteenth century Indian poets, playwrights, and writers How much was done for education in Bengal, partly by and during the life of the subject of this memoir, will astonish many of our people

at home. The reader must not be discouraged by the labyrinth of strange names through which the author leads him in the earlier portion of the book, nor by the lack of that continuity of narrative which we look for in English biographical works. Doubtless this book interests the Bengali themselves more keenly than it will us; but the English reader will find in it a valuable study of Indian life, particularly in the province now chiefly under discussion.

THE EVENING STANDARD AND ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE.

October 15, 1907.

A biography, translated from the Bengali and edited by Sir Roper Lithbridge of the Brahman reformer who had so great an influence over the mind and heart of the young Bengal of his day. The sub-title is: "A History of the Renaissance in Bengal."

TRIBUNE.

December 19, 1907.

These two singularly interesting volumes, each dealing with phases of Indian life in the early days of the nineteenth century—one with the Eastern side and one with the Western—and each unique in its way, may conveniently be considered in company; for the light they throw on the events of those far-off times well help us to understand much that is obscure in relation to the happenings of to-day.

This is especially the case with Pandit Sivanáth Sástri's almost reverential study of Babu Ramtanu Lahiri. Ramtanu, it may at once and cheerfully be admitted, was in no sense a personality of such importance as to call for an elaborate biography. We may take it on the authority of his biographer, as well as on that of Sir Roper Lethbridge, who knew him intimately and admired him greatly, that Ramtanu lived an exemplary life and was a man of considerable learning and marked amiability of character. He spent his life

in teaching in various schools in Bengal, and he earned some odium among the orthodox by discarding the sacred Brahmanical thread. In his earlier days he was a pupil of the famous David Hare, and later on of Derozio, the brilliant Eurasian disciple of Thomas Paine. It was under these influences that Ramtanu became a reformer, and he unquestionably left his impress on the age is which he lived.

Those were the days when, under the sway of Macaulay's enthusiasm, the old East India Company yielded (not without reluctance and misgiving) to the doctrine that the salvation of India lay in the adoption of Western methods, and especially of Western education. The immediate consequences of this policy are related by Ramtanu's biographer with unconcious frankness. Young Bengal took with avidity to all the bad Western characteristics, "drinking, swaggering about the streets, smoking and singing, and leading life of loose habits," while religiously eschewing more commendable ways of which, it may well be, conspicuous exemplars were fewer in India in those days than they are in these.

It was during the second quarter of the century that the new epoch arose in the political, social, and educational history of Bengal, of which the sequel is being manifested in the Bengal of to-day. Reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy arose to turn the faces of the people from the East to the West, and in due time to revolt from priestly Hinduism in favour of the purer monotheistic doctrines of Vedanta. Young Bengal was "fired with the desire to do away with everything that was old and embrace everything that was new"; and simultaneously with the demand for instruction in the arts, science, and politics of the West there grew the appetite for social reforms on the English pattern. Ramtanus active life was contemporaneous with the development of these new phases of thought. and those who would study at first hand the history of the Renaissance in Bengal and trace the genesis of the existing intellectual and political conditions in that province would do well to read this unreserved and wholly unsophisticated servey of the period in which Ramtanu flourished.

THE NEW AGE.

January 18, 1908.

This is a book of extraordinary value to all who would watch the development of education and politics in India. It has been translated into English by the son of its subject (Mr. S. K. Lahiri, the well-known Calcutta publisher), and it may be said at once that an unusual feature is that the reader will find it difficult to decide the whether the appendix is not more interesting than the rest. The appendix is a series of brief lives of Bengali leaders in the nineteenth century who were friends of Ramtanu Lahiri, and a wonderful Plutarchian series it is. There are Rammohan Ray, the famous Tagore family, Pandit Vidyasagar, A. K. Dutt, Keshav Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, Michael Dutt (poet and dramatist), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (Bengal's great novelist), and many others: poet, dramatists, novelists, educationists, journalists, lawyers, politicians, all the intellectuals of Bengal for a hundreds years. And some of them were great men indeed, perhaps together equal to the leading men of England during the same period. Those who still say that India has not produced men fit to rule India had better not dare to read this book: it might convert them. Mr. John Morley for instance, if he reads it, will feel some shame surely, as he recalls the contempt he poured on Indian statesmanship this year in our commonplace House of Commons. And yet these fine men were merely "Reformers," all of them believers in British rule; liberals, who had no other view of the future of their native land beyond that of various quiet, constitutional improvements. They and their successors, the more determined agitators of to-day, have their counterpart in the English Liberals as compared with the new Socialist Party. The parallel is almost exactly true. Lajpat Rai, Bepin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Bannerji, Tilak of Poona, and the others are probably as able as their Liberal forerunners, but they are controlled by a new idea, a new hope, a new inspiration, while subjected to that contemporary belittlement so well understood by the philosophical historian. And so like British Socialists, the new men in India are more forceful

and independent, more despised and ridiculed, than the old Liberals of the past century ever were or ever will be. Still, we must honour men of the past, for they fought well and did much. Most of them spang from poverty to large social positions, some of them lived adventurous, dramatic lives. A few were aristocrats, as the Lahiris were, and all of them were devotees of progress. Some were calm devotees, a few in youth were rash, and lost their respectability, their moderation. Some of the stories of this process are very amusing. Ramtanu Lahiri himself was a Brahman of the highest sphere, and his fathers held well-paid offices under various princes of Bengal. But under the influence of David Hare, of Calcutta, and later of H. L. V. Derozio, a young Eurasian schoolmaster, the real hero of the book before us, he became a Reformer, practically a member of the Brahmo Samaj (the New Theology movement of the time, still "going strong"), an advocate of widow marriage and of the abolition of widow burning, and even became a man bold and bad enough to cast away the sacred thread worn round the body by all Brahmans. For this crime he suffered great persecution, but he never put on the thread again. His life's work was teaching, and he did his duty in such a way that he was and is still called the Arnold of Bengal. As a schoolmaster, he in turn influenced scores of his contemporaries all their lives, and was almost idolised, as young Derozio was, by a large circle of disciples. He was really a big man, a great force, though England does not know it, and perhaps no country but ours could remain so ignorant of such a man's work, and that of his clever friends, especially of young Derozio, the man who insisted upon the free discussion of ideas, new and old, and taught his Bengali pupils to do the same.

Ramtanu Lahiri was born in 1812, when our Gladstone was three years old, and died in 1898 (Gladstone's death year). In that time Bengal found herself, but England does not know it; and this book is a record of the discovery, in English, for Imperial people to read. Will they read it, these Imperialists now prevailing? Perhaps the India Office will present copies of Lahiri's life to the public libraries of the Empire.

The book is well written and contains a number of portraits The translation is excellant But a book so full of historical facts and large personalities ought to have an index, though without this aid, in one case at any rate, every line of it has been read with an interest increasing to the end Of course the book has its faults, but we have not noticed them its excellancess are too impressive

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WORLD'S WORK.

December 1907

Ramtanu Lahiri, Brahman and Reformer, * * * belongs to a class of books of other than home origin that ought to be more commonly read by our people The life of the great educationist and reformer is described by Sir Roper as "one of the most important works that have appeared in pure Bengali The man himself he reverences for his gentle, saintly life and lofty patriotism There is a great deal to be learnt in this book about Bengal from an aspect not usually presented to the English reader and in view of the present situation in India, the work deserves to be read

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THE BRISTOL TIMES AND MIRROR.

December 23 1907

This work is a history of the Renaissance in Bengal as illustrated by the life of the now celebrated Reformer, Ramtanu Lahiri, from the Bengali of Pandit Sivanath Sastri, M A and edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge The book appeals particularly to those of our countrymen who keep themselves well up in the history of our great dependency The hero of the story was a most energetic, far-sighted man, who had the true interests of India ever before him, and his blameless and loyal life shows how a man whose creed differs so greatly from that of current Christianity may

afford an example of a beneficent life worthy of the closest imitation. His efforts in favour of education and of the bettering the condition of the women of India were most successful. He inspired a strong feeling of personal affection amongst his pupils, and "modelled many a mind afterwards noted for intellectual and moral excellence." Aiming less at the mere imparting of knowledge, he strove for a healthy stimulation of the intellect, the emotions, and the will of those who came under his influence, which was ever fostered and sustained by the noble life which he led. The book is well illustrated by portraits of numerous persons with whom he was associated in his life's work.

PUBLISHERS' CIRCULAR.

November 23, 1907.

The lifetime of Ramtanu Lahiri was synchronous with the Renaissance of Bengali literature—the period of awakening in Bengal that saw the birth of the various schools of reform in religion and morals "that have so mightily changed the whole aspect of Bengali life and thought." He died in 1898. The work introduces the reader to a large number of interesting and varied characters and scenes grouped round the central personage—a man of noble character and lofty aims; it also combines in a remarkable manner Oriental and Western modes of thought. Copiously illustrated.

LITERARY WORLD.

February, 1908.

The subsidiary title of this book as a history of the Renaissance in Bengal is a somewhat grandiose and not altogether an appropriate description of its contents. But the work is in itself, and more

especially at the present time when so much is heard of the 'Unrest in India,' one of extreme interest and of considerable importance. It is a biography of one of those early educationalists and social reformers in Bengal who have done so much to promote the study of English literature among their fellow-countrymen, and to remove the ancient prejudices and the rigid, and to us somewhat absurd, customs which are the outcome of the Hindu religion and which have stood so much in the way of social reform. Ramtanu Lahiri's efforts in this direction commenced so early in the last century as 1833, when he was a teacher in the old Hindu college, and they continued up to the time of his death in 1898. There are few in the ranks of the educated Bengalis who can show so long and useful a record, although his name may not be so well known in the Western world as the names of some who have achieved greater distinction. What, however, distinguished him more especially was the moderation of his counsels and the complete absence of racial prejudice. He was no advocate of violent and hasty reforms, but he laboured with diligence to prepare the way for the acceptance of such social changes as would promote the well-being of the Indian peoples. That he was known for many years as 'the Arnold of Bengal' is a worthy tribute to his efforts in the extension of education. Sir Roper Lethbridge contributes an appreciative Introduction to the book, in which he says of the illustrious subject of it that he took 'the truly conservative line of reform without wanton destruction, and of criticism without rudeness or vulgarity.' There are many illustrations in the book, portraits of various members of Ramtanu Lahiri's family, and of his numerous friends.

THE SCOTSMAN.

October 14, 1907.

Messrs Swan Sonnenschein & Co. (Limited) send out *Ramtanu Lahiri* (5s. net), a translation from the Bengali of Pandit Sivanath Sastri, M.A. The subject of the biography was a Bengali gentleman, who did a great deal for social and educational reform in his

native province, so excellent, indeed, were his educational methods, and such was the influence he exercised upon his pupils, that he was often called the "Arnold of Bengal" Sir Roper Lethbridge K C I E, who has edited the English translation, points out that the life time of Ramtanu Lahiri was synchronous with the Renaissance of Bengali literature, and he pays a high tribute to the reformer's zeal, integrity, and nobility of character The volume contains illustrations of many of those who were intimately associated with Ramtanu Lahiri in a movement which has left a permanent impression on Bengal

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NEWCASTLE CHRONICLE

November 12, 1907

Ramtanu Lahiri was a Kulin Brahman who died in 1898, and whose life synchronised with the early growth of English education in Bengal and the Renaissance of Bengali literature Sir Roper Lethbridge who edits this book, was formerly Principal of Krishnagar College, Bengal, and was a Fellow of Calcutta University He enjoyed for thirty years the warm friendship of Ramtanu Lahiri, and was therefore well qualified as an Anglo-Indian not only to appreciate the lofty aims of this gentle educationist and reformer, whose predecessor was the Raja Rammohan Roy, and whose successor was Keshava Chandra Sen (Keshab Chander Sen), but to present his biography to British readers very largely in its original state, as it left the pen of Pandit Sivanath Sastri The translation is by Mr S. K Lahiri, a Calcutta Publisher, and son of the subject of the memoir, and the editor has centented himself with a careful verification of the accuracy of the English renderings, and with such minor alterations or deletions as the occasional divergence of Eastern and Western thought seemed to require Ramtanu was educated at the old Hindu College at Calcutta, in which he became a teacher in 1833 In 1846 he became second master of Krishnagar College but he held appointments at various times at

Burdwan and Uttarpara, and at all these educational centres he was commonly known as "the Arnold of Bengal." His influence, as the editor says, "taught men to become not merely reformers in the ordinary sense of the term—not merely teachers of a destructive creed that is only critical without being sympathetic—but also better citizens and better men, with earnest longings for intellectual and moral progress Yet not without full appreciation of all that was best in the past, and a conservative desire to retain and improve it." He threw off his Brahmanical caste as a sacrifice to a great cause, and at one time, spurned by his relatives, he had nowhere to lay his head, but Raja Sris Chandra encouraged nim in his work and received him with open arms. In the words of his Bengali biographer, he "had true manliness, a bold heart to fight for truth, a determination to advance the cause of virtue, and courage to repress everything that was immoral" At the present juncture, when other Bengali "reformers" are making a great stir this book ought to be of unusual interest.

GLASGOW HERALD.

November 6, 1907

A double interest belongs to this biography. It sets before us the history and character of a notable Hindu of the last century, and reveals to us at the same time the view taken of his fellow countryman, and of the Reform movement with which his history was bound up, by a cultured Bengali Pandit of the present day. Ramtanu Lahiri belonged to the school of Rammohan Ray and Keshub Chunder Sen. By birth a Brahman of the Brahmans, a Kulin of high descent, he was gradually led by his convictions to abandon his caste privileges, and finally to denounce cast in the most open manner as a social and moral evil, and the great curse of India. He never came before that Western public after the fashion of his friends Rammohan Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen; his disposition was too quiet and retiring for that. But his character, by the testmony of such men as MaxMuller

and Sir Roper Lethbridge, no less than of his own pupils and followers, was one of singular purity and charm, and his career as a Professor in Krishnagar College and as an educational and social reformer, has left, we are assured, a deep mark upon multitudes of minds.

The style of the biography is naive and even quaint, and we constantly feel in reading it the diffierence between the European and the Hindu mind, but the English (for which one of the sons of the reformer is responsible) is excellent, and the story is well though simply told. We are enabled to follow the boy in his early struggles for an English education, in which like many another young Bengali he owed much to that large-hearted Scotchman David Hare. We see him plunged suddenly into the midst of that great revolution in things political, social, and educational by which Bengal was stirred during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Out of this he emerged with his mind fully made up and his sympathies thrown decisively on the reforming side and though at first despised and shunned by his countrymen at large, he moved steadily along the path he had marked out for himself, till he came to be recognised by all as a conspicuous figure in the story of the Indian Renaissance. As a theist he drew his inspiration more from the teaching of the Vedas and the poetry of Wordsworth than from the Gospel of Jesus; but he consistently maintained a moral standard of living so pure and lofty that we might almost apply to him the words of Tertullian about the soul that is naturally Charistian He died in 1898 at the ripe age of eighty-five.

Sir Roper Lethbridge pays a warm tribute to Lahiri not only as a former colleague in the Krishnagar College, but as a personal friend and describes Pandit Sastri's memoir as the most serious and sustained effort to combine 'in a biographical work, Oriental and Western modes of thought that has yet appeared in Bengali.' The illustrations consist chiefly of portraits of Ramtanu Lahiri himself and others who have taken a distinguished place in the history of the Indian Reform.

THE TIMES OF INDIA.

Nov. 20, 1907.

In a short preface to this book Sir Roper points out that "the life-time of Ramtanu Lahiri was synchronous with the Renaissance of Bengali literature—the period of awakening in Bengal that saw also the birth and early growth of Euglish education in the Country, and of the various schools of reform in religion and morals that have so mightily changed the whole aspect of Bengali life and thought." Pandit Sivanath Sastri, the present head of the "Brahmo Samaj" of Bengal, is peculiarly qualified, both by his position and scholarship, to interpret to us the early history of the movement of reform in Bengal. In writing the life of his friend and master, Ramtanu Lahiri, Pandit Sivanath Sastri has brought before the reader a very vivid picture of the moral and intellectural environment of the time. He has given not only the life of the man but the very atmosphere in which he lived and wrought. There are many features in the reform movement of Lahiri's time that cannot but be repulsive to the leader of the Brahmo Samaj at the present day. The biographer of one of the contemporaries of Ramtanu Lahiri, Raja Digambar Mitra, has said that 'Young Bengal was baptised in brandy.' In the present book, we have abundant confirmation of this painful fact. But this was only one incident of a situation full of painful features. A noble ardour for enlightenment was mingled in the minds of the first generation of English educated Bengalis with an unreasoning and ignoble contept for everything Hindu. Words were often spoken and things done with no other object than that of deeply wounding orthodox susceptibilities. The reaction was not long in coming. Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen, redeemed the reform movement from the excesses of its early advocates, and gave it a deep moral and spiritual character which it has since retained. The book is to be commended as presenting a picture of Indian home life, in its homely, if narrow, pieties, its enduring ties and petty jealousies, and its influence on the individual at once protective and constraining.

But the most remarkble fact about this book is that it is a very modern book though written originally in the Vernacular Bengali. Its outlook on life, its accuracy of detail, its analysis of character, are entirely modern. So also is its deep charity, its recognition and appreciation of true worth and character even when enveloped by a multitude of human failing. If anyone wishes to know how profoundly vernacular literature, especially in Bengal, has been influenced by modern literary canons, we can confidently recommend to him this book.

THE BOOKSELLER

Nov. 20, 1907.

The subject of this memoir had a long life—1813 to 1898—and is honourably known in Bengal as Edcationist and reformer—as Assistant Master and Principal in Several Government Colleges—and his biography reflects much credit on the Bengali Pandit, its compiler. The attempted reforms of the Hindu religion associated with the "Brahmo Somaj" of forty years ago profoundly affected Ramtanu Lahiri, although he never actually joined the movement of Rammohan Ray and his successor, Keshub Chundar Sen From what one hears, "Brahmaism" is not a flourishing cult, and never convinced Lahiri, who entertained a more tolerant and "catholic" view of things religious. That he was determined his opinions is shown by the fact that he, a member of the highest Brahman caste, discarded the outward sign of membership—the Brahmanical thread—as early as 1851, and, formally joining no other religion, lived in perfect amity, and holiness of life, with them all.

BIRMINGHAM POST.

Nov. 29, 1907.

Sir Roper Lethbridge has discharged a labour of love in editing an English translation of Pandit Sivanath Sastri's Bengali

life of Ramtanu Lahiri, Brahman aud reformer. The translation is the work of Mr. S. K. Lahiri, the son of the subject of the memoir. In the English dress the "life" is less fulsome than most Oriental biographies, though the editor has been concerned mainly with verifying the eteral accuracy of the translation. Rantanu Lahiri who died in 1898, was born in 1813, and as one of the band of intellectuals who had been the earliest to benefit by English education. He had a considerable influence on the religious and social reform movement in Bengal during the later half of the last century. He was more moderate and conservative than many of his contemporaries who imbibed liberal ideas at the same fount; and his sagacity is attested by the reaction of educated Bengal of to-day towards Hindu orthodoxy. The story of his life is of interest just now, when Young Bengal, having compromised with the ideals of the pioneers of Western learning, pursues a political ideal whose elusiveness may establish a reaction more violent than has followed the attack on religion and social custom.

THE NOTTINGHAM GUARDIAN.

Dec., 17, 1907.

This life of a notable educationist and reformer, whose active career (as Sir Roper Lethbridge points out) was synchronous with the renaissance of Bengali literature, is translated by his son, Mr. S. K. Lahiri, a leading Calcutta publisher. The rendering is almost a literal one, the editor having designedly concerned himself only with careful verification of the text and such minor alterations as seemed necessary. We thus get a very direct impression of the quality of the original work; and students of the great movements of social and religious reform which have been in progress in Bengal, especially in the middle period of the 19th century, will find a mass of most valuable material bearing on the subject. Sketches of many of the leaders in the reform movement, including Rammohan Roy, founder of the Brahmo Samaj, are introduced in the course of the narrative, and the personal story is often suspended in order that the author may explain the origins and tendencies of

the movements in which Ramtanu took part. Though an ardent supporter of the cause of freedom of thought and so far "advanced" that he formally rejected the "paita," or sacred thread, the badge of the Brahminical caste, and suffered much persecution because of it at the hands of the orthodox, he was never himself a member of the Brahmo Samaj. He opposed the Calcutta Brahmos in what he considered their unreasonable attacks on Christianity, and their attempts to give the Vedas the character of a Divine revelation. "I know," he said in a letter to a Brahmo friend, "that the subversion of idolatry is a consummation devoutly to be wished for, but I do not desire it to come about by employing wrong means. I do not allow the principle that means justify the end. Our desire should be to see the truth triumph. Let the votaries of all religious appeal to the reason of their follow-creatures."

Among the crowd of men appearing in these pages who have made their mark on Indian history one of the most interesting figures is that of David Hare, a Scotch watch-maker who went out in the first year of the century, and who took an active part in founding the Hindu College at Calcutta in 1817, and also in forming a a Society having for its object the establishment of English and vernacular schools. It was in a "Hare" school that Ramtanu got his first serious education. Lahiri Mahashai, as he was called in later years, was a Brahman by birth, a Kulin of high descent, whose ancestors had been for generations closely associated with the princely family of the Maharajas of Nadia, near Krishnagar. His father, Ramkrishna Lahiri, was the Dewan of two of the younger scions of the Nadia family. Though high-born, he seems to have been so poor that the problem of providing for Ramtanu's education was by no means easy to solve. Until eleven the boy attended a village "patshala." Then his eldest brother, Kesara Chandri, took him to Calcutta, and with the help of David Hare got him a free scholarship in one of the Society's schools. In 1828 he won his way to the Hindu College, where he came under the influence of Derozio, described by Sir Roper Lethbridge as "one of the most remarkable of the giants of the pre-University era in Bengal educational history"—

The extraordinary influence of this remarkable man remained with Ramtanu, and to a great extent determined the character of his active life. He became a reformer after the school of Raja Rammohan Roy, and a leader in New Bengal; but he was never a violent or extreme man, and except on the subject of his own Brahmanical caste, which he threw off as his own personal sacrifice to a great cause, and one or two other points of a like nature, he was never willing to exacerbate the differences betweem himself and his more orthodox relatives and friends.

Indeed, it was to the last one of his greatest troubles that his "heresy" caused his venerable father so much pain. The thought of Ramtanu's desertion of his caste, we are told, wrung the pious old man's heart, and caused him so much shame "that he could hardly hold up his head in public;' and Ramtanu was in after years often seen to weep like a child when speaking of the incidents of this terrible trial."

In 1833 Ramtanu became a teacher in the Hindu College, at a salary of thirty rupees a month. On this small income he brought two younger members of the family to Calcutta for their education, taking the whole cost of their maintenance on his shoulders. Far and wide he became known for his practical charity. A typical case is that of a student who fell temporarily blind, when Ramtanu read the whole course to him and coached him so well that he was able to pass his examination successfully. In 1846 he was appointed second master in the school department attached to the new Krishnagar College, which had been built and endowed partly by Government and partly by private gifts, including a large sum given by the Maharajah of Nadia. From this time he regarded Krishnagar as his home, but his connection with the college was interrupted several times by various causes, and at one time or another he filled posts at Burdwan, Uttarpara, Baraset, and other places; while after his retirement from active professional work he lived for some time in Calcutta. In the last decades of his life the veteran reformer suffered heavy family losses, and he died in 1898 as the result of an illness caused by a fall.

Sir Roper Lethbridge, who knew Ramtanu well, having made

his acquaintance and friendship as a member of the staff of the Krishnagar College (of which he was later on President) remark that he was commonly known as "the Arnold of Bengal." He claims to be entitled to speak of the influence the reformer exercised on the brilliant circle of Bengali leaders with whom he worked so many years. "That influence," he says, was altogether a wholesome one. It taught men to become, not merely reformers in the ordinary sense of the term—not merely teachers of a destructive creed that is only critical without being sympathetic—but also better citizens and better men, with earnest longings for intellectual and moral progress, yet not without full appreciation of all that was best in the past, and a Conservative desire to retain and improve it."

The eulogy pronounced by Ramtanu's friend and biographer may be quoted in part, for the sake of the note of e thusiastic veneration which inspires it, and also as a sample of his literary manner :—

Ramtanu Lahiri has left an imperishable name in the annals of the world's moral heroes. It was not his to achieve any uncommon distinction in the rich and rugged domains of learning. He had neither the opportunity nor the desire to take any prominent part in the political arena. Wealth or power had no charms for him. But far better than all this, he had true manliness, a bold heart to fight for truth, a determination to advance the cause of virtue, and courage to repress every thing that was immoral.

Sir Henry Cotton, who first knew Ramtanu when serving in the Nadia district, and was Chief Commissioner of Assam at the time of his death, wrote his son a letter of condolence, in which he refers to him as "the last of a generation who profoundly influenced modern thought in Bengal more than sixty years ago," and speaks highly of his blameless life and examplary character.

The volume is illustrated by many portraits, and notes by pupils and friends are given in appendices.

THE ORIENT REVIEW.

THE RENAISSANCE IN BENGAL.

By Mr. H Beveridge, C.I.E.

This is an interesting and valuable book, and is all the better for its digressions. It is the life of Ram Tanu Lahiri, a Kulin Brahman, but the biography has been constructed on the lines of Masson's life of Milton and contains notices of Ram Tanu's times and of his leading compatriots. It is in fact a history of the Young Bengal, or rather Young Calcutta movement which took place at about the same time as the Oxford movement. It is the less known of the two, but I think it may fairly be said that it has had a more fruitful and saner issue. The author of the book is Pandit Shib Nath Shastri who according to Sir Roper Lethbridge is one of the most distinguished writers of modern Bengal. The author's title for his book is 'Ram Tanu Lahiri and Bengal Society during his time.' In the translation this has been rendered "A History of the Renaissance in Bengal." It seems to me that "A History of Nascence in Bengal" would have been more correct, for Bengal civilization can hardly be said to have had an earlier birth.

Ram Tanu Lahiri belonged to a Brahman family which has spread itself widely over Bengal. It seems to have at first settled itself in Rajshahi, but it is now prominent in Mymensing, Rungpore and Nadiya. As the Lahiris are Kulins it seems probable that one of Ram Tanu's ancestors came to Nadiya as the bridegroom of a daughter of the Chakrabartti family which for generations had been the Diwans or Managers for the Rajahs of Krishnagar. The connection of the Lahiris with the Dewan Chakrabatti family led to their also serving the Rajah of Krishnanagar, and the popular Bengal poet Bharat Chandra has recorded the names of two of them as associates of Rajah Krishna. This association has led the biographer of Ram Tanu to give a short history of the Rajahs of Krishnagar. They are high Brahmans and claim to be descended from Bhatta Narayan one of the five Qanauj brahmans whom Adisur induced to come to Bengal in the eleventh century. The nineteenth descendant of Bhatta Narayan was Kashi Nath who was a land-owner

and resided in Bikrampur in the Dacca district. It is said that he was driven away from there by the oppression of Akbar's Nawab or governor of Bengal. He was caught during his flight and put to death. His wife was a native of Andulya and as her delivery was at hand she took refuge in the house of one Har Krishna Shamadar the Zamindar of pargana Bagwan. She gave birth to a son whom the Shamadar adopted and called by his own name. He thus became known as Ram Chandra Shamadar and he had a son called Bhabananda Shamadar. Bhabananda is said to have assisted Rajah Man Singh in putting down the famous Rajah Pratapaditya who ruled in Jessore, and to have been rewarded for this by Jahangir with Nadiya and other parganas and the title of Mozumdar. He was the founder of the Krishnagar Raj. As is well-known there is a Sanskrit Chronicle which gives these and other facts, and which was the subject of a review by Mr. Long in the Calcutta Review of July, 1855. The original manuscript went to Germany—fortunately perhaps—for a learned German (Dr. W. Pertsch) read it and published the text in Berlin, in 1852. The story about Kashi Nath may be true, but it is not mentioned by Abul Fazl in his *Akbarnama* He, however, mentions one Keda or Kedar Rai, the father of Chand Rai, in his account of the 37th year of the reign, and again in connection with the fort of Busna (?) He mentions that Keda Rai was wounded and took refuge with Isa Khan. In the supplement to Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* which is printed in the Bib. Ind. edition mention is made under the 47th and 48th years of Akbar's reign of Kedar Rai or Keda as the landholder of Bikrampur and Sarharpur. He was wounded in a fight with Man Singh's men, and fled but was captured and shortly afterwards died of his wounds. If the Nawab who is spoken of in the Chronicle was a Muhammadan, he may have been the famous Shahbaz Khan. It seems probable, however, that the Kedar or Keda of the *Akbarnama* was an ancestor of Kashi Nath and not Kashi Nath himself, and that the incidents referred to in connection with Kashi Nath took place in Jahangir's reign and not in Akbar's. Akbar had little possession of Eastern Bengal, and probably never had a governor there. It appears from Kissory Chand's article that it was the Nawab of Jahangirnagar, that is, Dacca, who

put Kashi Nath to death, and the name Jahangirnagar was not given to Dacca till Prince Selim became Emperor. Possibly the Nawab in question was the vigorous Islam Khan.

Ram Tanu was a son of Ram Krishna and grandson of Kashi Nath and he was born in his maternal's uncle's house in the village of Baruihuda in Chait (March-April) 1813. He had a remarkable cousin named Dwarika Nath Lahiri whose character and career had evidently a great influence over him. It is therefore fitting that short notice of him should be given here. Dwarika Nath belonged to the Bagan branch of the Lahiri family and was the grandson of Ram Tanu's great uncle. He was fourteen years younger than Ram Tanu, having been born in 1827 or 1828, but so impressed was Ram Tanu by his cousin's character that he said once to Shib Nath Shastri "Dwarika is by years my younger brother (cousin) but by character he is my father." Dwarika's father died while he was an infant, and he was brought up by his mother in his maternal uncle's house. When he was fifteen years old, some great distress happened to his mother, and he made a vow that he would leave his uncle's house and not set eyes on any of his relatives till he had by his own exertions relieved his mother's sorrow, which he had reason to believe was due to her poverty, and that he would not till then communicate with any member of his family. Having formed this resolution he went off with a few coppers in his pocket, and tramped all the way to Agra. There a Bengali gentleman took compassion on him and give him shelter and sent him to school. In a few years he acquired a knowledge of English and gained a silver medal. After passing through the college with distinction, he obtained an employment with good pay, and immediately wrote to his mother to come to him, and sent her her travelling expenses. She rejoiced to hear of her long-lost son and came to Agra. But now there began a fresh tragedy. Dwarika had always been a religious man and he now, under the influence of an Englishman, became a Christian. His mother was horrified, and her opposition embittered the rest of his days. By this time he had married and had two daughters and it is the youngest who tells the story of her grandmother's petulance and her father's patience.

"His mother fancied that if his Bible and other such books could be burnt, his religious studies would be interfered with; and he might change his views. So she set herself to destroy them, or to hide them. How often did she hide away the Bible! All this had no effect, and at the same time her conduct did not in any way diminish the respect with which he treated her. He endured all her scorn, and continued to put all his earnings into her hands. Sunday was his most trying day. On it he fasted and occupied himself in prayer and religious reading, while his mother made herself more than usually disagreeable and did all she could to vex him and interrupt his devotions. But he endured it all and only said with a smile, 'Mother, if you knew what is in my Shastras you would never behave like this." During the mutiny Hindus hid Dwarika and saved his life. Afterwards, when he was shut up in Agra Fort, along with the Rev. Mr. Evans, the latter described him as "Meek as a lamb, humble as a baby, true as steel." Unfortunately, Dwarika Nath did not live long. He died in October, 1864. I think that Dwarika's story is interesting, both for its own beauty and because it shows that religious ideas were in the air in the Lahiri family. Ram Tanu never became a Christian, but he admired the Christian religion and as a letter at p. 113 of the English translation shows, he objected to the attacks made by members of the Brahma Samaj on Christianity. His words are "I fear that there is a spirit of hostility entertained by the Society against Christianity which is not creditable. Our desire should be to see truth triumph. Let the votaries of all religions appeal to the reason of their fellow-creatures, and let him who has truth on his side prevail." Such a sentence as this might have come from Akbar.

The first great event in Ram Tanu's life was his removal to the neighbourhood of Calcutta where his elder brother Keshab lived. This was in 1826 when Ram Tanu was about thirteen years of age. His elder brother was a clerk on thirty rupees a month, and on this he had to support himself and contribute to the support of his parents in Krishnanagar. The idea was that Ram Tanu should go to an English school—there was none then in Krishnanagar—but there was none in Chetla, near Kalighat, where his brother lived,

and the latter was too poor to send his brother to a school in Calcutta At that time the well-known philanthropist David Hare was a watchmaker in Calcutta, and took a great interest in the education of Bengali boys. He had taken a prominent part in establishing a Hindu school and was on the committee of management. One of the regulations was that there should be certain number of free scholars, and Keshab's efforts were directed towards getting his younger brother being included on the list of such. He obtained the assistance of a pandit in one of Hare's schools, but Hare was already besieged by such applications and declined to put Ram Tanu on the list, saying that the number was now complete. However, the pandit did not desist and told Ram Tanu to follow Hare's palanquin for some days. It was, it seems, Hare's practice to go out every morning on his palanquin, visiting his various schools and then to return in the evening. By this time he had disposed of his watchmaking business to a friend, and was living on his savings, and giving all his attention to native education. Every morning Ram Tanu would come from his lodging in the pandit's house to Hare's house on the riverside, wait till his palanquin came out and then trot along with it to the various schools, and back again to Hare's house. One evening Hare on getting out of his palanquin noticed the boy's pale face, and asked him if he was hungry. Ram Tanu, being afraid of losing his caste, denied that he was, but Hare looked into his face and said "Tell me the truth; you wont have to eat in my house, this confectioner will give you something to eat" alluding to the fact that Hare had established a "tuck shop" for his boys near his house. Then Hare added "Tell the truth, have you had anything to eat to-day." Poor Ram Tanu was conquered and confessed that he had eaten nothing that day. So Hare sent him into the shop and made him have a good meal of sweetmeats. This went on for about two months, Ram Tanu trotting alongside of the palanquin and getting sweetmeats in the evening. At last Hare yielded and put Ram Tanu on the free list. After studying in the school Ram Tanu was admitted into the Hindu College in 1828, and five years later he became a teacher there on a salary of thirty rupees a month. Henceforth teaching was Ram Tanu's profession. In the

course of the career he went to various places in Bengal—Uttarparah, Krishnagar, Barisal, and Burdwan, and everywhere he won the affection of his pupils, and developed their aptitudes. His friends called him the Arnold of Bengal, but I doubt if there was much in common between the two men, except a devotion to duty. Arnold was a strong man, and a fighting man and could hit hard as when he denounced the Oxford Malignants. Ram Tanu was made of gentler stuff and was more of a Melanchthon than a Luther. His hold over his pupils seems to have been due to the interest he took in them, and to his eagerness to instruct them. Like his biographer, he was fond of digressions and we are told that if he came across a word in the day's lesson which had interesting associations for him, such, for example, as the word Arab, he would leave the beaten road of the day's task, and tell his class about Muhammad, and Mecca, and Medina.

In the Hindu College Ram Tanu became the pupil of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, a Young Urasian, who in 1828 was appointed fourth master. Derozio was himself a very unripe scholar for he was still under twenty and the only schooling he ever had was at Drummond's Dhurramtollah Academy which he left when he was fourteen. Derozio wrote much both in prose and verse during his short life, and his biographer, Mr. Thomas Edwards, has given in the *Calcutta Review*, of 1881, many extracts from his poems. It cannot, I think, be said that he was a vigorous writer, and there seems to be little in his verses which a matured taste would admire. Here and there, however, we find a pretty thought prettily expressed; for example, when he speaks of the pale crescent of the early moon as being

"Faint as the mem'ry of departing years,"

a phrase which reminds us of Carlyle's expression about the Sabbath bells of his native land being like

"The departing voice of eighteen hundred years."

The Legend of the Shashan (burning ghat) given by Mr. Edwards is, however, a spirited ballad, and the idea of "The Faquir of Junghira" that is, of the Jazira or island-rock in the Ganges near

Sultan-ganj in Bihar is a good one, and apparently original. It is in two cantos and the first opens with a description of Nalini a young Hindu widow's being about to be sacrificed as a Sati. From this terrible fate she is rescued by a former lover who has now become the chief of a band of banditti whose stronghold is the island-rock. There the lovers live in happiness till the chief is slain in a foray—the last one he intended to take part in before retiring with his Nalini to quieter scenes. The poem ends with Nalini's searching, like another Edith, for her lover's body, and becoming in truth a Sati by falling dead beside his corpse.

"Now all around is tranquil as the sea
When hushed, it seems as in a reverie ;
So still, so silent, you might hear the beat
Of your own heart, or seraph's viewless feet,
Or deem your mind's imagining had found
Some spell to form itself into a sound—
One of those thin ethereal tones that we
Oft hear at night--the heart's best minstrelsy.
Too pure for mortal ear and earthly pain.
But lo ! alone upon the battle-plain,
Pale as embodied moonlight, glides a form
Like a soft breeze, when silenced is the storm.
Is it a spirit from a happier sphere
Come down to mourn o'er wreck'd enjoyment here ?
Or learn that earth has lost its paradise ?
Or bear a tale of suffering to the skies ?
'Tis poor Nalini....."

At all events, the poem was a remarkable production for Eurasian lad of seventeen, and shows that Derozio had acquired great command of language, and also that the glamour of an Indian night and of the soft lapping of the Ganges-waves had sunk deep into his soul.

But whether Derozio was a great genius or not, he must have had a magnetic personality for he attracted all the pupils of the college and not merely those who were in his own class. His

career in the Hindu College was a short one; for after three years he was removed on a ground similar to that urged against Socrates, to wit, that he corrupted the youth of the city, and yet in that short time he made a wonderful impression. As Mr. Edwards says "Neither before, nor since his day, has any teacher within the walls of any native educational establishment in India ever exercised such an influence over his pupils." Mr. Edwards may be suspected of partiality both as a biographer and a Eurasian, but hear what the clerk of the College, Hara Mohan Chatterjee writes concerning him.

"The students of the first, second, and thiird classes had the advantages of attending a conversation in the school held by Mr. Derozio, where readings in poetry, literature, and moral philosophy were carried on. The meetings were held almost daily, before or after school hours. Though they were without the knowledge or sanction of the authorities, yet Mr. Derozio's disinterested zeal and devotion in teaching the students their subjects was chracterised by a noble philanthrophy. The students in return loved him most tenderly, and were ever ready to be guided by his counsels, and imitate him in all their daily actions."

No doubt his youth was in his favour. The many excellent men who came out in the Educational Service, such as Brennand and Cowell, probably arrived too late in life to make a great impression on their pupils. This must always be an evil inseparable from the recruiting of the Educational Staff from English Universities.

Max Muller, in his *Auld Lang Syne* remarks, in speaking of Ram Tanu that "The teacher who chiefly influenced the young men was Derozio, who, though branded by the clergy as an infidel and as a devil of the Thomas Paine school, was worshipped by his pupils as an incarnation of goodness and kindness." Unless by the word "clergy" Max Muller meant the orthodox Hindu party, his remark is rather unfair. It was not the Christian clergy who turned out Derozio. It was the Hindus led by Ram Kamal Sen, the lexicographer and grandfather of Keshab Chandra Sen. Ram Kamal's motive however, was a good one, and his statement of acts could not be gainsaid. The ground he took up was that the attendance of students was falling off on account of the doctrines said to be

taught by Derozio. No less than twenty-five pupils of respectable families had been withdrawn and there were not less than 160 boys absent. Some were indeed said to be sick, but many proposed to withdraw unless a change were made. The first proposition before the committee was that Derozio should be removed as he was the root of all the evils and the cause of public alarm. Horace Hayman Wilson and David Hare opposed this resolution and testified that Derozio was a highly competent teacher, and it was lost. But when the proposition was brought forward, viz., that in the present state of of feeling amongst the Hindu community, it was expedient to remove Derozio, Wilson and Hare were unable to oppose it, and declined to vote, as the question was one of native feeling. Probably they felt like the High Church curate in the *Mill of the Floss* who found himself obliged to cease from sheltering Maggie Tulliver that it was expedient that the individual should suffer for the good of the community. The result was that Derozio had to go. The correspondence between H. H. Wilson and Derozio may be seen in vol. vii. of series ii of the selections from the *Calcutta Review*. It closes with a vigorous and temperate protest from Derozio. He did not long survive the blow. He was removed in March or April, 1831, and, after an unsuccessful attempt to carry on a newspaper, poor Derozio died of cholera on 23rd December of the same year. To their honour be it said that Krishna Mohan Banerji, Ram Gopal Ghose, and others of his pupils attended him on his deathbed : He was buried in the burial ground on the south side of Park Street, but though his grave is, I believe described in the Bengal Obituary it does not appear to be now marked by any monument.

In the twenties of the last century there was a great movement among the Eurasians. They too had their stirring, and endeavoured to assist themselves. Derozio was prominent in this movement and so was one Charles Pote who was an artist and who painted the portrait of Lord Metcalfe. Pote is not a common name and possibly this artist was a descendant of the Pote of the Indian Civil Service who left a valuable collection of Persian Manuscripts to Eton and Cambridge.

It is a singular circumstance and one which has not been sufficiently noticed that the young Bengal movement of 1827-1840, though it was fostered by Englishmen and English literature, was not started by Missionaries or even believers in Christianity. Thomas, Ward, Carey, and Marshman did good work and were early in the field, but they lived at Serampore and it does not appear that they had much influence over the upper classes of the Hindus. Alexander Duff came later and he reaped the harvest that Derozio had sown, for his first two distinguished converts (Mohesh C. Ghose and Krishna M. Bannarji) had been Derozio's pupils. David Hare, the idol of the Calcutta Babus, was not, it seems, a professing Christian, and could not be laid in consecrated ground, and David Drummond who started the Dhurrumtollah Academy was imbued with the doctrines of the French Revolutionaries and of Thomas Paine. Drummond was a native Fifeshire, and born about 1785. He came out to India in 1813. He was Derozio's only schoolmaster, and as he had a poetical mind though a crooked body he no doubt greatly influenced his brilliant pupil. Derozio was himself, as we have seen, accused of atheism, and though he denied the charge, he was certainly not orthodox.

Ram Tanu's last appointment was that of Headmaster of Krishnanagar College. This he held till 1865 when he retired in consequence of ill health. After his retirement he resided for a while in Krishnanagar, and eventually moved to Calcutta to the house of his son the well-known publisher. During his retirement he was an object of respect both to Eurasians and Natives. He was thrice married, but all his wives died before him. He had much sorrow owing to the deaths of his children. The death of his daughter Indumati who was a pupil of the Baniapukur school must have been especially grievous to him. This happened in the end of 1877 and it was followed next year by the death of his son. It was these losses that induced him to leave Krishnanagar, where he had been the guardian of the young Rajah, and move to Champatala, in Calcutta. In 1889 his wife died, then came the deaths of dear friends such as Vidyasagar and Kali Charan Ghose. Ram Tanu died peacefully on 18th August, 1898. He was an excellent man and combined gentle

ness with firmness and outspokenness. On the only occasion that I had the pleasure of conversing with him, he expressed great indignation at the conduct of a Krishnanagar jury who had acquitted a brahman who was believed on good evidence, to have committed a brutal murder. "I think," he said, "they will have to do away with trial by jury in Bengal."

It only remains to recommend to our readers the perusal of Ram Tanu's biography either in the original or the translation. The translation is no doubt correct for it has been made by Ram Tanu's son, but the editor has altered the arrangement of the book and made some omission. For instance the notice of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar has been considerably abridged, and there are omissions also in the notice of Radha Nath Sikdar. He was one of Derozio's pupils and became distinguished as a mathematician. It is stated in translation that he became perfectly anglicised in customs and manners after his return to Calcutta (from the North-West Provinces). This is hardly warranted by the original which, moreover, is based on hearsay. I notice that by a misprint Dr. Fuller is described as having been his teacher whereas it should be Dr. Tytler :

From Sir HENRY COTTON, K.C.S.I., M.P.

45, St. John's Wood Park, London N. W.

14th February, 1908.

My dear Sharat Kumar,

I duly received the translation of your father's life and read it with much interest. I had already studied the original and am much obliged to you for both copies and consider that they form a worthy memorial of your father's life and work.

The great service rendered to the Bengali nation by Baboo Ramtanu and his eminent contemporaries will never be forgotten by a grateful posterity

I am as busy as I can possibly be and with all best wishes to yourself am

Yours very sincerely

From Mr. W. B OLDHAM, C.I E

DUNBRY, VILLE AU ROI

GUERNSEY

My dear Sir,

Yesterday your letter of 2nd January reached me and this morning your present—the life of your father Babu Ramtanu Lahiri—by our friend Sir Roper Lethbridge—a very handsome volume I had already seen the work noticed and favourably reviewed and hoped to be able to see it at an early opportunity, for as you know I am one of those who are proud to be able to say that they knew your father—but never expected that a copy of it was to be my own in the way you have so made it I have only had time to look through the book but see that it is full of interest—the most vivid personal interest to me in recalling and giving pictures of friends whom I am never likely to see again and many of whom have already passed from this being I keep your venerable Father's life, therefore, to read at my most undisturbed leisure and look forward to doing so with keen enjoyment Meanwhile I hasten to write to you my warm thanks for having thought of me and given me such an unexpected pleasure

Believe me to be

Your's sincerely

From Mr. F E. PARGITER, B.A.

Formerly a Judge of the High Court, Bengal

12, CHARLBURY ROAD, OXFORD.

13th February, 1908.

Dear Sarat Babu,

I have much pleasure in sending separately a photograph of myself for you and hope it will reach you without damage.

I spoke to Sir William Herschel about your book and no doubt he has written to you. It has been translated and the translation is reviewed very favourably in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, the part for last month I hope it will lead to a wider knowledge of the book.

Yours very truly

From RAJA PEARY MOHAN MUKERJI, C.S.I., M.A., B.L.

UTTARPARA

19-4-08.

The life of a great and good man whose example and teachings exercised no inconsiderable influence in moulding the life and character of two generations of the youth of Bengal is a most welcome addition to the Indian biographical literature. Written in a fascinating style Sir Roper Lethbridge's work has made the minutest details in the life of the great educationist highly interesting and instructive. To me and other surviving pupils of Babu Ramtanoo Lahiri of revered memory the book is simply invaluable

From BABU SYAMACHARAN GANGULI,

136, CORNWALLIS STREET, CALCUTTA.

30th April, 1908.

My dear Sharat,

I thank you heartily for the copy of the English version of the 'Life' of your father, in Bengali, by Sivanath that you have sent me, and also—at this distance of time—for the copy of the original 'Life' which I received at the hands of Khetra and so had no occasion to thank you for.

I am glad indeed that an English version of the original work has been brought out by you in collaboration with Sir Roper Lethbridge. In its present form it can have readers all over India and also among members of the ruling race who have no knowledge of Bengali. The present record of your father's zealous and highly successful work as an educator of youth, and of his rigid adherence to his convictions in all that he did in life cannot fail to be an inspiring force widely over India; and the perusal of the record by an increased number of English readers is likely to work in some small measure towards a better appreciation by the English people of the Hindu race to which your noble-minded father belonged.

As a pupil of your father while he was Head Master of the Uttarpara School, I feel impelled on the present occasion to give expression to my sense of deep indebtedness to him for the healthy influence he exercised upon my mind at a time of life when it was very impressionable. While going through the present volume I have lived over again in imagination the happy time when I sat at his feet and learnt—have recalled to mind the high enthusiasm which inspired his work, the feeling of devout reverence with which he always spoke of "my [his] master," Mr. Derozio, and other personal reminiscences of him.

I cannot conclude this note without pointing out a defect I have noticed in the book. No uniform system has been followed in the transliteration of Indian names and words, and there are a good many misprints too in regard to such names and words.

Yours affectionately,

THE BENGALEE

1st May, 1908.

We have had for sometime lying on our table a life of Babu Ramtanu Lahiri by Sir Roper Lethbridge. It is practically a free translation of Pandit Shibnath Shastri's work in Bengali. The translation is worthy of careful perusal. Babu Ramtanu Lahiri's was a noble and selfless life devoted to the worship of principles, which our youngmen would do well to study in all its details. Here we have the picture of a simple and self-sacrificing individual, combining gentleness with strength, the largest charity for others with the firmest determination to live in the light of his own principles. In these days of self-advertisement and of pugnacious self-assertion, the study of a character like that of Ramtanu Lahiri would prove a highly useful corrective. The work is important from another point of view. It throws a flood of light upon contemporary history, ideals and aspirations. We move among the blessed memories of the past and stand face to face with the beginnings of ideals then in their state of germination. All true biography is history; and the biography, before us, is eminently so. It reveals to us Bengal such as Bengal was, just after English education had been introduced. We have great pleasure in recommending the book.

THE STATESMAN

7th April, 08.

There are many people, not only in Calcutta, but throughout India and also in Europe, who will welcome the English translation of Pandit Sivanath Sastri's "Life" of the late Ramtanu Lahiri, one of the most eminent of the band of distinguished men associated with the Bengali *renaissance* and the social and religious reform movement of the last century. The translation is the work of his son, Mr. S. K. Lahiri, the well-known publisher of Calcutta, and the manuscript has been edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge. The work is illustrated by a number of portraits of notable men associated with

the life and times of the revered Ramtanu Lahiri. To readers unacquainted with Bengali this opportunity of becoming acquainted with the biography will be very welcome, and even those who have read or can read it in the Bengali will, doubtless be glad to possess the English version. Messrs. Swan, Sonnenschein, and Co. are the London publishers, and Messrs. S. K. Lahiri and Co., of College Street, Calcutta, are of course responsible for the publication in India.

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

Vol. for 1908 p. 235.

Ramtanu Lahiri, Brahman and Reformer. From the Bengali of Sivanath Sastri, Edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge (London 1907.)

If the deeds and character of ancestors are, as Thucydides says, a possession to their descendants, the subject of this biography started life with a noble inheritance and followed the advice of Pericles in leaving it augmented and not diminished for those who came after him.

The Lahiri family were Bráhmans, who for generations had served the Rajas of Nadia at Krishnagar, and had been connected with the Dewani of Krishnagar. On a division of the family property between Ramgovinda, the great-grandfather of Ramtanu, and his brother, all the valuable possessions were set on one side, and the image of the family deity with a small piece of land on the other, and Ramgovinda chose the deity, and bore cheerfully the poverty that accompanied his choice. The youngest brother of Ramtanu was a generous physician, loved by the poor "A cartload of straw" on one of his prescriptions puzzled the dispenser, until the doctor explained that till the patients roof was mended medicine could not cure him, and he therefore made a present of the straw. The mother of Ramtanu was also of honourable birth, but she chose to live in poverty with her husband, working with her own hands rather than that he should lose his independence by using the Kulin Brahman's privilege of living with his father-in-law. Ramtanu was first sent to the local *pathsala* where, as in our English dames' schools, much chastisement made up for little learning, and the masters favoured those boys who made them most presents. Krishnagar was at that time no good place for bringing up a child, and little Ramtanu was sent to his eldest brother Kesava, who, with the proceeds of a small office, in which temptations to increase his narrow income by indirect means were common, managed with

unfailing integrity and great self denial to bring up his younger brothers and help to support his parents. Ramtanu was admitted as a free scholar after much patient importunity at the school founded by David Hare to give western knowledge to the Hindus. His relations with his school friends, and not only with them, but, different from English ideas on the subject of Hindu ladies, with the mothers and sisters of his school friends were very happy. A charming tribute to home influence of the kind we most reverence in England is given by Isvara Chandra Vidyasagara, in speaking of the mother of a friend: "In the whole range of my experience I have never found one equally loving, kind, courteous, and amiable. He who has personally come under the benign influence of a woman like Raimani cannot help adoring the sex to which she belonged." In 1828 Ramtanu was admitted to the Hindu College.

Two streams flowed together to swell the desire for improved education, the one fed by the generous desire to bestow the blessings of western education, inspired by such men as Grant, Carey, Marshman, and Ram Mohun Roy; the other rising from scholars like Sir W. Jones and Wilson, who reverenced Sanskrit, and desired to deepen the knowledge of the Pandits, then generally limited to grammar, logic, and Hindu theology, but not including Veda, Vedantas, or Puranas, or the Gita. The East India Company, urged by Lord Minto and the Sanskritists, sought to develop Sanskrit learning, while Dr. Duff added his strength to this missionary and patriotic zeal of those who desired western knowledge. At this moment of new ideas, Ramtanu fell at college under the influence of Derozio who "introduced a new epoch in the intellectual and moral history of Bengal." His generous enthusiasm and great talents had an undying influence on his pupils. It is however to be regretted that the zeal for high ideals inspired in them was accompanied by lack of discrimination, and that the eating of beef and drinking of wine were essential parts of western discipline to his young hearers, many of whom caused just scandal to the orthodox Hindus by getting drunk in honour of western civilization. "How," said one, "shall we Indians be civilized, and how will our country be free from the tyrannical sway

of error and superstition, if we abstain from wine?" "Break down everything that is old, and rear in its stead what is new," was their cry. But the zeal first shone as to food found a nobler outlet in the feeling of young India as to social and religious reform. Derozio's instruction gained them honour in literature and science, but what is more, "they were all considered 'men of truth,' and there was then a saying: 'so and so cannot lie because he is a Hindu College boy.' Incidentally we see a point of view differing from our own in a criticism of the author's as to the previous decay of truth among the Hindus due partly to flattery of their Mahomedan conquerors, but also, he says, to the spirit of setting truth at naught but the English courts showed. It is said that these courts had no regard for actual facts, if they were not borne out by evidence. Truth was not esteemed by them in itself, but only when it was supported by witnesses." This remark is given for what it is worth, but it is not a criticism that is obvious to the Englishman at home.

We must refer readers to the book itself for the account of Ramtanu's work as a teacher which earned him the title of the Arnold of India; or the share he and his friends took in supporting the founding of the Calcutta Medical College, the Calcutta public Library, the giving freedom to the Press, the abolition of *sati*, the education of girls, and the question of remarriage of widows. In all questions he was too modest to put himself forward, but earnestly though quietly supported his friends Persuaded that it was hypocritical to advocate his advanced views on religion and yet carry out the ordinary habits of a Brahman he gave up his Brahmanical thread, and not only suffered persucution himself but endured the patient and unrepining grief of his father for his heresy. Such was his love of liberty, when old and weak, that the quotation of a great speech on liberty was as a spark to set his thoughts on fire. We have in him the picture of one who combined simplicity and gentleness with unflinching truth the type of that Rama from whom his name was derived. No country can have been richer in noble lives than India during the last century, and it is of interest to compare the great men whom England sent out—Nicholson, Sir Herbert Edwards, the Lawrences, Mr. Hare,

and Dr Duff, with those noble Hindus who met them in their efforts to bring help to the country of their adoption This book has been dealt with at length because it is typical, especially in its earlier parts, of a life that Europeans do not know, and which can hardly servive the conditions of the present century alike as a picture of life, and as a portrait of a noble character, it is worth reading for all who care for India

C M R

THE HINDUSTAN REVIEW.

April, 1908

Ramtanu Lahiri, Brahman and Reformer, by Sir Roper Lethbridge, K C I E Swan Sonnenschein *6s.* net

That a volume such as this dealing with the Bengal Renaissance, as it is called by the author, and with a personage practically unknown to English readers, should be published by so eminent a firm, and be received so well, is a clear indication that at least a certain section of the British public are interested in India, and the thoughts and aspirations of its people The story of the introduction of English education into India and the advantage taken of it by the earnest young band of reformers of whom Ramtanu Lahiry was one, is well told The text is taken from the Bengalee of Pandit Sivanath Sastry, M A, which accounts for the apparent bias against Mohammadanism to whom not only all the vices but all the weaknesses of the Hindu are attributed We should like to have heard the Editor s (Sir Roper Lethbridge s) opinion upon this, 'the greatest fault of the volume, but, unfortunately, he is silent As a biography, however, of a man characteristic of the changing times, a man with new ideas in his brain, activity in his veins, and at heart full of the milk of human kindness, this book is written in a sympathetic manner, a humane spirit, and a temper which is at once conservative and liberal in its desire for reform without want on distinction India needs such characters as Ramtanu Lahiry to-day, when unrest is perhaps more prominent than in his days, but perhaps they will be forthcoming when literature such as this is published to inspire and and encourage them

From BABU ASWINI KUMAR DUTTA, M. A., B. L.

Zemindar and Proprietor B. M. College, Barisal

MATHRAN, BOMBAY

March 1-7-08.

MY DEAR SARAT BABU,

I am immensely obliged to you for your kind present of Sir Roper Lethbridge's life of your ever to be remembered father. I shall preserve this and the original book which also you kindly presented to me as long as I live with the sincerest feelings of love, reverence and admiration for the *Rishi*.

Ever yours sincerely

From Sir ALFRED CROFT, M.A., K.C.S.I.

RUMLEIGH, BERE ALSTON, S.O.

DEVON.

30-4-1908

MY DEAR SIR,

I have read with very deep interest the life of your distinguished and venerable father, Ram Tanu Lahiri, and I wish to thank you most cordially for so interesting and valuable a gift.

Babu Ram Tanu Lahiri occupied so notable a place in Bengal during the second half of the 19th century, that the history of his life is really the history of Bengal—social, religious and educational—during that important period of change and advance.

The biograply is extremely well done. To me it is throughout of the closest interest, because so many of the chief actors in the contemporary drama were well known to me and were, I am proud to think, among the number of my friends. But the book will, I am confident, command a wide circle of readers among the large class in England who, while they have never visited India, are deeply

interested in all that concerns that country, and deeply sensible of England's responsibilities in the matter. By all such this life of your father will be welcomed as a boon, and as throwing a flood of light upon these social conditions in Bengal which, while they are fast passing away, are indispensable for the understanding of the new conditions that are taking their place.

Allow me to congratulate you very heartily on the completion of the work, for which I anticipate a great success as soon as it comes to be known.

With renewed thanks and every good wish

Believe me,

My Dear Sir,

Very truly yours

From C. H. TAWNEY Esq., M A., C.I.E.

Oatlands Grange,

30-4-1908.

My Dear Sir,

I am exceedingly obliged to you for sending me the life of your father, Babu Ramtanu Lahiri. The book is very interesting to me, and the photographs recall the faces of many old friends. Your father's is very good. He has a noble head, and must have possessed great brain power.

I take great interest in Bengal.

Indeed it is only now, that I have left India, that my real feelings about India, and especially Bengal, have become known to myself.

Your sincerely

THE LIVERPOOL DAILY POST & MERCURY

6th November, 1907.

RAMTANU LAHIRI

Occasionally and spasmodically the British public manifests some slight interest in Indian affairs. Even this transient interest is largely dependent on some unusual circumstance such as the revival of the unrest that preceded the great Mutiny, and Mr Keir Hardie's foolish (if not worse) speeches. And yet there is sufficient of the romantic associated with the most ordinary events in India to repay a continuous study of the lives of the men who have made modern India. "The Life of Ramtanu Lahiri" (Sonnenschein), is not a great biography, or even the biography of a superlatively great man; but it does lift the veil—or shall we say a corner of the veil?—that conceals from the European mind the peculiar influence of Western education and religion upon the Eastern mind. This strange graft, that is, Christianity upon a nature that is essentially Indian, is easy of observation in this Indian biography of brief compass written by a Bengali and translated by a well-known Calcutta publisher, and himself the son of the subject of the biography. The book has no gift of style—that, perhaps, is lost in the translation. But still the mastery of English by the translator is worthy of note, and shows that educated natives are quite at home in the use of our language. Lahiri (1813-1898) came of a high caste Brahmin family. He was born in Southern Bengal, and with a predisposition in favour of both Western literature and religion, for revolt against the old Hindoo traditions appears to have been a family trait. Educated at first in his native city, Krishnagar, the old capital of Bengal, and later in Calcutta, Lahiri soon came to be known as one of the most learned men of his time. Early in life he decided to enter the teaching profession, and he was soon known as one of the ablest instructors in English methods of education in India. Appointed the head of a Hindoo college, he exercised a good influence upon the young men of his time, an influence not much unlike that of Jowett or Caird, allowing for the difference between University life in India and Oxford, and the difference in this respect is very great. Still more

momentous were the changes in the spiritual outlook of this remarkable man. Quite early in life he fashioned for himself a creed, partly Unitarian and partly Pantheistic. That creed was expounded in Liverpool in the Myrtle-street Baptist Church nearly forty years ago by one of Lahiri's disciples, Keshub Chandra Sen.

We gather from the biography under consideration that it is no easy matter for a Hindoo to become a Christian; he has against him his entire female household, and that means more in India than it does even in England. Women in our great dependency receive very little education, and the little they do receive strengthens religious prejudices and closes the mind against the inroad of Western ideas in any line of thought. And until the women of India are educated, the work of the missionary and the reformer will be both uphill and of little avail. The Hindoo wife can make matters so uncomfortable for her more liberal-minded husband that nowhere is compromise with conscience carried so far as in India, with the result that men of education are usually Agnostics, though outwardly recognising the old forms of native religion. But with Lahiri there was no concealment of his beliefs: in conduct and profession he was during the whole of his life, a thoroughly consistent Christian—that is if we waive his departure from orthodox forms of belief. Lahiri's long life was almost contemporary with the history of education in India; indeed, the first part of his education was after the method that had existed in Bengal for centuries. The native schoolmaster was not a trained teacher, but one who had failed in some other profession. Sent with his pupils into an outhouse or to the roof of the building, he usually dozed the hours away with a cane in his hand ready for use if any of his pupils happened to disturb him. The boys read very little, but were taught to write on palm or plantain leaves; mental exercises were the main branch of education, and in this the Indian is pre-eminent. Punishment even for the most trivial offences was excessive. In a report made to Lord William Bentinck on the system of education then in vogue in the country, it was stated that there were fourteen different methods of punishment in use. "One was to make the offender powerless" by tying his hands and legs, and then "to apply nettles all over his

body." Another was to put the victim in a sack together with a cat and to roll it about. The cat tore the boy's body with its teeth and claws, and when the boy was brought out it took some time to revive him. This barbarous condition of things, needless to say, has long disappeared from Indian school life, but the other extreme has been reached, and the widespread lawlessness in most educational centres is a serious problem not only for the educational reformer, but also for the politician, for this spirit of insubordination has been directed by demagogues against the Government of the country.

The first education grant in India (£10,000) was made in 1813. Twenty years later this modest sum was increased to £100,000. Lord Macaulay was then in India, and the directing force in native education, he held that Indian methods of education ought to be replaced by European. His view was that the English language and literature were more suitable to the needs of modern India than was Eastern literature. This axiom is indisputable even now, but it has been carried vastly too far; education in India at the present time is too literary and not sufficiently practical. In a well-informed article in the current number of the "Edinburgh Review" it is stated: "The literary and legal graduates and licentiates number about 41,000; the medical, engineering, and scientific number only about 3,000. In all India there are from the Indian universities barely 350 doctors and bachelors of medicine, fewer than 250 doctors and bachelors of science, and not 200 bachelors of engineering. Bombay University has sent out thirty-six men with a diploma in agriculture, and the Madras University one licentiate in sanitary science." This is a serious condition of things in regard to higher education in India. At the present moment there are thousands of university men not employed at all, or only earning low wages. It is no uncommon thing to find graduates earning only £1 per month, and this distressing fact partly explains the unrest in India; that there is at the present moment a large body of young men ready for any change which promises some relief to their hopeless poverty. Lord Curzon has made strenuous efforts to direct Indian education into more useful channels. In 1901 he called together a conference to discuss this important subject, and in a

rescript he urged upon local authorities the need for a more vigorous encouragement of the growth of crafts and agriculture. In elementary education in India the problem is just as perplexing as it is in higher education. Three out of every four villages are without schools, and life in India is almost exclusively village life. Not more than one-fifth of the youths of school age receive any education at all beyond that given by the Zenanas, and the greater proportion not even that. We have already alluded to the backward state of female education in India, and therefore it is sufficient to add that not more than 2½ percent of the female population of school-going age receive any school education. These are a few of the problems which confront the reader whenever he takes up Indian history or biography, and it is the duty of every Englishman to solve in his own mind, with the aid of the literature at his hand, these questions that are vital to the prosperity of our great dependency.

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN

Nov. 12, 1907.

It would be rash to predicate a wide circle of readers outside India for Sir Roper Lethbridge's edition in English of Pandit Sivanath Sastri's LIFE OF RAMTANU LAHIRI, BRAHMAN AND REFORMER (Sonnenschein and Co, pp 228 6*s*. net). Yet in its Bengali dress the work enjoys considerable popularity, and the translation, which is due to the filial piety of Mr. S. K. Lahiri, the well-known Calcutta publisher, leaves nothing to be desired, Ramtanu Lahari was, as a matter of fact, a remarkable man, and the friend and associate of many remarkable men. His whole life was closely connected with the period of intellectual and religious awakening in Bengal between the thirties and the fifties, which was the direct result of the birth of English education and he was neither ashamed nor afraid to be a reformer in days when the merest suggestion of mental or moral change on Western lines was regarded as a dangerous innovation by the Hindu

world The twenty-nine illustrations in the book are mostly portraits of distinguished Bengali contemporaries of Ramtanu, and their interest is undeniable to the student of what Sir Roper Lethbridge rightly terms the Renaissance in Bengal But a bad blunder has been committed by the ascription of a likeness of Ramtanu's eldest son to Derozio the gifted Eurasian poet and teacher who died in 1831 at the age of 23 Although the verses of the 'Bengali Keats" are now forgotten, they were in their hour the object of much admiration, and as a schoolmaster he was the idol and oracle of Young Bengal and has left no successor in their affections The blunder is the more to be regretted as the original work contains an accurate portrait of the wonderful youth who more perhaps than any other man inspired the revolution that has so completely altered the whole aspect of Bengali life and thought

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From

SIR GOOROODASS BANERJEE, Kt, M A, D L, Ph D

MY DEAR SARAT BABU,

I must apologise to you for the delay that has occured in my acknowledging with thanks the receipt of your kind present of a copy of your excellent publication—Ramtanu Lahiri by Sir Roper Lethbridge

A life of such spotless purity, such earnest devotion to truth and such firm faiths in Providence as your venerable father lived, is well worthy of careful study

With best wishes,

I remain,

Yours sincerely